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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 005645

SIPDIS

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TAGS: MARR MOPS PREL TU I2

SUBJECT: CHOD OZKOK EMPHASIZES KURDISH ISSUES AS KEY TO TURKISH DECISION ON STABILIZATION FORCE

(U) Classified by Ambassador Eric Edelman. Reasons 1.5 B and 1D.

11. (C) SUMMARY: During the AMB's 9/5 introductory call on GEN Ozkok, the CHOD focused on ethnic tension in nIZ and its effect on Turkish public opinion, and thus on Turkey's ability to contribute troops to the stabilization force. US action on PKK/KADEK is also a key factor in Turkey's decision, and thus Ozkok looked forward to the initial State-led team due in Ankara the following week. End summary.

12. (C) TGS Chief GEN Hilmi Ozkok was relaxed and friendly during the Ambassador's 9/5 introductory call. Prior to consulting his notes, Ozkok made complimentary remarks about Commander CENTCOM GEN Abizaid. He also asked about the pending UNSCR, to which the AMB noted these were early days in the process.

13. (C) Apologizing for the formality, Ozkok then read from notes making the following points:

BILATERAL RELATIONS: They have been long, close and warm. They are more important today than ever. He then listed what he called Turkey's extensive contributions to Operation Iraqi Freedom, including pre-war (ONW) and post-war (GLOC).

HLDG: While the 18th HLDG scheduled for May had been postponed, new D/CHOD GEN Ilker Basbug will co-chair the anticipated November meeting in the US with the intention of helping develop momentum in the bilateral security relationship.

NATO: SACEUR GEN Jones' recent visit was very constructive. Focus was on the new command structure. Turkey is ready to host the Air Component Command (AIRSOUTH) and is the lead NATO nation for the NATO Response Force's land component.

IRAQ: Ethnic tensions in northern Iraq cause security problems for Turkey. Turkey approaches Iraq as a whole, with no ethnic discrimination. No ethnic group should be allowed to use force for its own ends. Kirkuk and Mosul belong to no local groups. The recent clashes in Tuzkhurmata demonstrate that the PUK is a troublemaker. They are "as negative as Saddam vis-a-vis the Turkmen." The Kurdish raid on the Kirkuk deeds office during the war was another example of ethnic-driven policy. The US should be even-handed and raise these issues with the PUK. The AMB later in the meeting noted that our bilateral ties are much broader than the Iraq-centric current focus and that democratic allies who differ could solve differences privately through honest and direct talk. Ozkok agreed and said that such honest and frank talk had kept the July 4 Suleymania event from having a greater negative impact on relations. AMB agreed that intercommunal violence is dangerous for our nation-building efforts. He was relieved that quick intervention by US forces had help calm the Tuzkhurmata situation and noted that US forces had detained Kurdish police who had opened fire. Communication between US and Turkish forces appears to be better, and the Embassy's Army Attache has gone to Silopi today (9/5) to liaise with the Turkish Special Forces Command there. AMB told Ozkok Turkish concerns had been passed to Washington and Baghdad.

TURKMEN: Ozkok said he was disappointed that the only Turkmen cabinet slot was the "insignificant" Science and Technology ministry. AMB noted that the US had already been criticized for making too many decisions based on ethnic balance, which could undermine the overall goal of a unified Iraq. Two Turkmen had been picked for the important Constitutional Commission. Ozkok agreed, but said ethnic balance was important in these early stages. While Turkey also had a "kinship" with the Iraqi Kurds, the Turkmen are more in need of Turkey's protection. The Turkish public is sensitive to this issue. As above, AMB said that Washington and Baghdad had been informed of Turkey's views.

TURKEY IN STABILIZATION FORCE: Ethnic tensions in nIZ (Tuzkhurmatu being the worst recent example) have a side-effect on Turkey's ability to contribute troops. Kurdish statements opposing Turkish participation affect Turkish public opinion. Claims that Turkey instigates such clashes to create a raison d'etre for military intervention are false. Turkey cannot be indifferent to the future of Iraq, but the final decision on troop contributions belong to the government and parliament. The military will give them the best info they can.

MIL-MIL TALKS: Ozkok was happy with the 9/4 discussions. Both the TGS and CENTCOM are working on the details of a Turkish Area of Responsibility (AOR) in the Anbar region as well as alternate AORs. Turkey's logistical capabilities are an important factor.

PKK/KADEK: The terrorist organization is a destabilizing force in nIZ. It uses the area for training and staging. Turkey has taken "diplomatic actions" such as the Reintegration (Amnesty) Law to deal with the problem, and Turkey looks forward to cooperating with the US on this. The PKK/KADEK uses different names in different areas, and the US should be careful not to talk to them in any guise. The State Department-led team GEN Jones had said would come the following week will be a very important visit. AMB re-confirmed the President's commitment not to allow Iraq to be a haven for terrorists. AMB also said he hoped next week's State-led team would be followed by other teams, which could discuss the reintegration law, info ops, Turkish refugees in Iraq (Makhmour) and other strategy elements on which we could cooperate. GEN Abizaid has his hands full at the moment, but the internationalization of the coalition should help free-up US forces to deal with the PKK/KADEK. Ozkok said he understood why anti-PKK/KADEK ops had moved slowly, but now they must move more quickly.

BORDER DIFFICULTIES: When AMB pointed out slow-downs in fuel shipments to the 101st AB in nIZ, Ozkok admitted that Turkish border operations were too slow. The Habur Gate has a limited capacity. Night operations are hampered not only by lack of lighting, but by personnel shortages. The various GOT agencies need to send more people so Turkey can process vehicles 24/7, which is not currently the case.

NOTE: Army Attaché (now in Silopi as mentioned above) told us afternoon 9/5 that in fact the Habur Gate is operating 24/7, although the Turks there told him that manning was reduced at night. Army Attaché personally observed the gate operating between 0200-0400 that morning. End note.
EDELMAN